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PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHV #0679 3451452  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 111452Z DEC 09  
FM AMEMBASSY VILNIUS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3979  
INFO RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 2058  
RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY RIGA PRIORITY 3690  
RUEHTL/AMEMBASSY TALLINN PRIORITY  
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW PRIORITY 3830

UNCLAS VILNIUS 000679

SIPDIS

EMBASSY WARSAW FOR REGIONAL MEDICAL OFFICER  
EMBASSY COPENHAGEN FOR REGIONAL ESTH OFFICER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KFLU TBIO PREL LH

SUBJECT: FLU PANDEMIC ABATING IN LITHUANIA

REF: VILNIUS 630

¶1. The wave of flu and flu-like illnesses in Lithuania is receding. In the first week of December, infection rates were at 104 cases per 10,000 people, a decrease of 40 percent from the 175 cases per 10,000 people reported a week earlier.

As of December 11, the GOL had attributed nine deaths to H1N1 flu. At the peak, flu had reached epidemic levels in 57 of Lithuania's 60 municipalities, but three of those 57 areas declared this week that they had dropped below epidemic levels again.

¶2. Since November 17, according to the National Public Health Center, 4,295 persons have been hospitalized for flu or respiratory illnesses, with 301 of those placed in intensive care. As of December 11, about 5 percent of Lithuania's 1,443 schools were closed because of high absenteeism, primarily attributed to flu. At the nadir in late November, less than two-thirds of the country's schools remained open. The American International School of Vilnius, which is attended by many Embassy dependents, did not have to close because of flu and has seen its absence rates drop back to normal levels.

¶3. Lithuanian print and broadcast media continue to run public-service announcements telling people how to minimize the risk of contracting flu. Media also continue to report on the epidemic, but the tone of the coverage has grown calmer as fears have abated that the pandemic would be more deadly.

¶4. On December 2 the GOL released about 50,000 packages of antiviral drugs to supplement those that the Ministry of Health had already released to hospitals from its own reserves. The government also allocated 4.5 million LTL (nearly 2 million USD) to the Health Ministry to replenish its stocks of antiviral medicines.

LEADER